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ONE HUNDRED TENTH CONGRESS

U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Energy and Commerce
Washington, DC 20515-6115

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June 15, 2007

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The Honorable John M.R. Kneuer
Assistant Secretary for Communications and Information
National Telecommunications and Information Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce
Herbert C. Hoover Building
1401 Constitution Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Mr. Kneuer:

The Committee on Energy and Commerce and the Subcommittee on Telecommunications and the Internet are interested in the role of telecommunications in the dissemination of speech that may encourage or advocate hate crimes. In particular, the Committee urges the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) to conduct a study and issue a report on this matter.

The Committee successfully included a provision as part of the National Telecommunications and Information Administration Organization Act (the NTIAO Act), signed into law by President George H.W. Bush in 1992 that directed NTIA to conduct a similar study. This statutory directive, found in Section 155 of the NTIAO Act, required NTIA to "prepare a report on the role of telecommunications in crimes of hate and violent acts against ethnic, religious, and racial minorities." The NTIA completed this report and submitted it to Congress in December 1993.

Technology has changed dramatically since the 1993 report, which was completed when online information services and the Internet were in their nascent stage of popular adoption. The Committee believes an updated report, to reflect changes in telecommunications technologies as well as their impact on mass media marketplace participants, would illuminate important issues for public discussion.

The Honorable John M.R. Kneuer
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The Committee does not wish to erode First Amendment protections or to infringe upon the fundamental liberty of any citizen. Rather, we seek information about the current uses of telecommunications media, particularly uses by broadcast facilities licensed on behalf of the public by the Federal Communications Commission, and whether such uses convey messages of bigotry or hatred, creating a climate of fear and inciting individuals to commit hate crimes.

The Committee trusts that you agree such issues merit NTIA's attention, especially because 15 years have elapsed since the previous report was conducted. Thank you in advance for your time and attention to this matter. If you should have any questions, please contact us or have your staff contact Colin Crowell or Mark Seifert with the Committee staff at (202) 226-2424.

Sincerely,



John D. Dingell
Chairman



Edward J. Markey
Chairman
Subcommittee on Telecommunications and the Internet

cc: The Honorable Joe Barton, Ranking Member
Committee on Energy and Commerce

The Honorable Fred Upton, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Telecommunications and the Internet